

Keeping in Touch

May 1997

Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches

THINK IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO GET TO CONFERENCE IN AUSTRALIA? THINK AGAIN!

Think it's too late—or too expensive—to attend the historic UFMCC General Conference XVII in Australia this July? Think again! As many MCC'ers are discovering, it's not too late to make plans to attend. And many churches are finding creative ways to raise the funds to send their delegations.

Up Front

Nathan Meckley
Jim Birkitt

First...it's not too late! You can still pre-register through June 15, or you can even register on-site in Sydney. Space is also still available to book travel and lodging with Above and Beyond Tours. They will accept bookings until the beginning of July, while space remains available, but don't delay! A late booking fee of \$50 will apply to all reservations made after May 1. Space is still available for the extension trips and day tours — but going fast. Questions? Call Above and Beyond at 1-800-397-2681 or 415-284-1666.

If money is a concern, it's never too late to try creative avenues for Conference funding. Dr. Robert Schuller, the enthusiastic proponent of "Possibility Thinking," recommends a technique for "making the impossible possible!" He calls the system "Count To 10... And Win!" With your goal firmly in mind, run the numbers 1-10 down the left hand side of a sheet of paper. Now dream! Brainstorm! Off the top of your head list 10 ways you might reach your goal. Then begin working through your list. Test each idea. According to Dr. Schuller, usually at least one idea on your list will "hit gold."

With that in mind, we'd like to offer some creative ideas you might include on your list that other churches are using to "make their dream come true."

■ Is your church big...on talent and energy? A "Fun Fest" was held at MCC Washington DC and included a variety of 22 acts from music and poetry, to drag and a Parade of Easter Bonnets. The proceeds were earmarked for travel to Australia.

■ Try Sunday brunch after church. You can catch people before they leave church — probably for brunch somewhere else! Add a 50/50 raffle, some good spring weather, and maybe some entertainment. MCC in the Valley, North Hollywood, California, has found this a successful delegate fundraiser.

■ Have you considered one of those trendy mystery parties where people attend in character? Serve a nice dinner, raise some money and have a great time.

■ How about a Dance and Silent Auction? Ask local businesses to donate items or services and designate the income for Conference travel. MCC Eugene, Oregon succeeded with their Valentine's Dance.

■ Invite members and friends to donate frequent flyer miles. Even if you don't have enough to get to Sydney, you may be able to get the "add-on" flight to Los Angeles, reducing your costs. Even if you've asked before, try inviting again — someone may have earned more mileage!

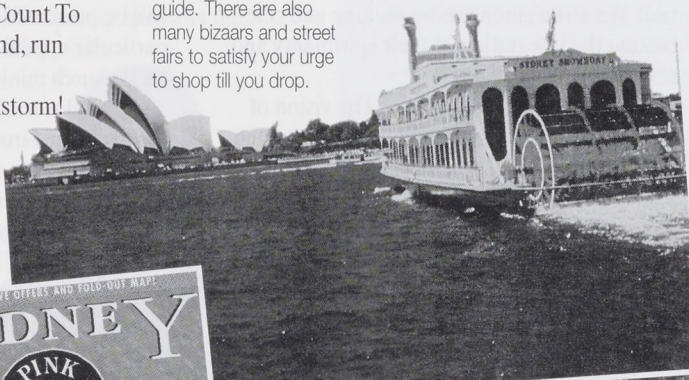
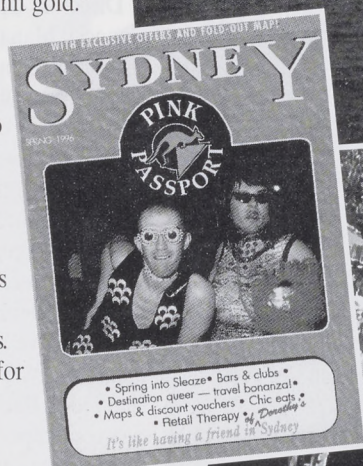
■ Do you have members or friends who work for the travel industry? They may donate "buddy passes" for UFMCC travelers.

■ Make a list of those in your community with "deep pockets" (even non-MCC'ers) and send them a letter or speak to them about the historic nature of General Conference and how it will help your congregation better serve your local community and invite a significant (tax-deductible) donation.

More than just an opera house:

You will find Sydney to be abuzz with night life, and community publications can be your guide. There are also many bazaars and street fairs to satisfy your urge to shop till you drop.

■ Invite members to designate a portion of their tax refunds to "make the dream come true."



If you have any questions about the General Conference or need registration forms, call UFMCC Headquarters at (310) 360-8640. Or e-mail us at UFMCCHQ@aol.com. Or fax us at (310) 360-8680. Or visit our website at <http://www.ufmcc.com>, where you can download registration forms and information.

General Conference XVIII in Australia promises to be our most exciting and historic conference to date! We hope – really hope! – to see you there as we make history together!

UFMCC MISSION, VISION STATEMENTS PROPOSED FOR GENERAL CONFERENCE

General Council has proposed the following mission and vision statements for our denomination. They will be presented for affirmation during business sessions at General Conference XVII. The next issue of *Keeping In Touch* will feature the proposed ministry priorities to be voted upon at General Conference, and which will form the basis for our new denomination budgeting process.

Proposed Mission Statement: The Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches is a Christian church founded in and reaching beyond the gay and lesbian communities. We embody and proclaim Christian salvation and liberation, Christian inclusivity and community, and Christian social action and justice. We serve among those seeking and celebrating the integration of their spirituality and sexuality.

Proposed Vision Statement: The vision of the UFMCC is to embody the presence of the Divine in the world, to challenge the conscience of the universal

Christian Church, and to celebrate the inherent worth and dignity of each person. As we move toward this vision, by 2003, UFMCC will be comprised of at least 70,000 members and adherents who are all called and equipped to minister with excel-



lence. This diverse global body will be widely recognized as a prophetic light and driving force for an inclusive Christian spirituality which celebrates the integration of spirituality and human sexuality. Through our strengthened local churches, we will meet the justice and faith needs of people in increasing numbers of countries and cultures.

GENERAL CONFERENCE: IDEAL PLACE FOR TRAINING, EDUCATION

Excitement is building for General Conference in Sydney, Australia. What a great destination for the most influential gathering in UFMCC life! General Conference, as always, will also be a great place to gain new ministry skills by attending workshops for professional and personal development. Nearly thirty workshops will be presented on a variety of issues, all with particular appeal and geared to equipping local church ministry.

Several workshops are being sponsored by the Strategic Growth Initiative including the following topics: "Community, Cause,

Corporation: A Paradigm for Church Development"; "Board of Directors Update on Financial Management," "Reaching Generation X," and more. For example, "Benchmarks of Excellence in The Church" will feature diagnostic tools and resources to help local churches improve quality in three key ministry areas: Purpose, Vision & Mission; Celebrative Worship; and, Effective Stewardship. Also sponsored by SGI, "Front Door, Side Door, Back Door" will discuss contemporary trends and personal reasons which impact

individuals' choices of churches. "Guerilla Marketing for the Local Church" will explore cost-effective, proven strategies for publicizing your church's ministries and reaching the unchurched.

From "Technology for the Church," to "Successful Christmas Eve Outreach," work-

shops will stimulate new ideas to implement in your local church. You'll find new inspiration in the workshops "Clergy Pastoral Transitions" and "Doing Yourself Justice: Reconnecting Personal Power for Effective Leadership in Ministry."

Health and wholeness are concerns in every MCC and workshops on HIV/AIDS and substance abuse, as well as a workshop on the "Asian Approach to Health" by Dr. Chung Hyun Kyung will be offered. Special interest workshops such as "Gay and Lesbian Parenting," workshops in Spanish and special offerings for registrants

("non-delegates") will also be offered. Workshops by the Women's Secretariat, Faith Fellowship and Order, Ministry of Diversity in Spiritual Community and the Commission on the Laity will highlight the important concerns of these particular ministries.

Not only can you look forward to a great time in Sydney, but it will be a terrific chance to gather new skills and knowledge to take home and enhance ministry. Verification of General Conference workshop attendance will be available to meet the continuing education requirements for UFMCC clergy.

CATHEDRAL OF HOPE MCC ASSISTS HEALTH CLINIC

The Rev. Michael Piazza, senior pastor of Cathedral of Hope MCC has presented a check for \$40,000 to Trinity Ministry to the Poor. The funds were collected by the Cathedral congregation during Lent and will be used to help fund a health clinic for homeless and impoverished people.

"Although we are in the midst of raising money for a new building, we are deter-



Conference, catholics: Sydney will be a great place to learn hands-on skills at workshops, above. Lower: Rev. Ron Helms attended a recent Roman Catholic mass where a bishop asked the forgiveness of gay and lesbian people.

A Fellowship of Opportunity

Looking for a course in church growth? Conflict resolution? Church revitalization? Interpersonal communications? Creative ministry? Or some esoteric theological concept? UFMCC Office of Clergy Development has compiled a listing educational opportunities, courses and conferences. For a free copy, call the Rev. Maggie Tanis at (310) 360-8640 or send an e-mail request to UFMCCHQ@aol.com.

mined to be faithful to the calling of Jesus," said Piazza. "It's tempting to strike back at those who continue to attack our community or say gay and lesbian people can't be Christians. We have chosen instead to use our energy to build a church that proves them wrong. Through programs like this and the many other benevolence ministries and service projects, the Cathedral of Hope seeks to embody the spirit of Jesus."

In addition to the \$40,000 donation, the congregation is also donating time and talents as volunteers for the Trinity ministry.

MCC NEW YORK CELEBRATES 25TH ANNIVERSARY

Metropolitan Community Church-New York City celebrated its 25th anniversary during Holy Week with over 1000 people attending the combined Holy Week and Easter services. The church celebrated its founding by the Rev. Howard Wells in 1972 with the testimony of Mr. Dubose "Mac" McLane, a charter member who described the first worship service of MCC-NY as outdoors, in a city park, next to a subway station, during a rainstorm. Then, 10 years ago, the Rev. Pat Bumgardner became pastor of the church. Since that time the church has grown by 100% and secured property now valued at \$1 million that is fully paid. MCC-NY also produces a weekly television show.

The New York City church has always involved itself in the community it serves. From its participation in the annual Gay Pride Celebration, to its work in feeding 2700 homeless people monthly, Pastor Bumgardner reports, "Our success is clearly communicating a vision and a mission for our church within our city, and beyond our borders."

The Rev. Elder Troy D. Perry was the speaker for Holy Week services. One highlight of the celebration was the surprise visit of Manhattan Borough President Ruth Messinger to the church's 25th Anniversary Banquet. Ms. Messinger honored the 25th

anniversary of MCC-NY and ministry of its pastor to those in need, and declared March 29, 1997 as "The Rev. Troy D. Perry Day In Manhattan."

As part of the weekend celebration, Rev. Perry made a presentation on Sunday night for the UFMCC Capital Campaign and received \$89,355.50 in gifts and pledges. This is the highest offering to date for the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches Capital Campaign from any local church. Pastor Bumgardner noted, "I believe our people contributed so well because we have always felt such an integral part of the programs of UFMCC and because we parallel the growth of the larger denomination. These gifts are also seed faith for our own vision of buying a larger building in the next few years so that our congregation might continue to grow well beyond our goal of doubling our membership in five years."

UFMCC INTERNET PRESENCE GROWS

GLBT Christians have an increasing number of opportunities to receive information, share their faith, and nurture friendships on the Internet.

America On Line now sponsors two on-line chat rooms for GLBT Christians. These are safe places to share questions, discuss concerns, uplift each other in prayer and chat with other Christians. The rooms meet Thursday and Friday evenings, both from 8-10 Eastern (5-7 Pacific) time.

■ Thursday night's room is within the OnQ portion of AOL (Keyword: GLCF chat, then select Community. ■ UFMCC officially sponsors the Friday night room together with

■ **Troy Perry Day in Manhattan:** Borough President Ruth Messinger, center, with Rev. Pat Bumgardner and Rev. Perry, made a surprise appearance at anniversary ceremonies of MCCNY, declaring it Troy Perry Day in Manhattan.



Love and prayers to the Rev. Elder Wilhelmina Hein who has been appointed Interim Area Coordinator for New Zealand. ■ The Rev. Ron Helms of Open Arms MCC, Rochester, NY attended the recent, historic Roman Catholic Mass for the gay community at which Bishop Matthew Clark asked for forgiveness from gays and lesbians. Pastor Helms spoke with the bishop and encouraged an ongoing dialogue. ■ Angels of Hope MCC, Green Bay, WI, continues to grow. They now have nine children involved in their Children's Ministry and are considering offering a Vacation Church School this summer. ■ Congratulations to the Rev. Tom Bohache, assistant pastor of MCC NOVA (Falls Church, VA), who was invited to present a paper at the American Academy of Religion in Macon GA. His paper explored the history of biblical interpretation in the early Christian church. ■ Rev. Ron Helms of Open Arms MCC, Rochester, NY, was recently renamed to Congresswoman Louise Slaughter's Religious Leaders Advisory Committee for the 28th U.S. Congressional District. ■ Good Samaritan Parish MCC, Toledo, OH, and Tree of Life MCC, Ypsilanti, MI, celebrated a "Joint Anniversary Weekend" in April with a dinner, auction, lots of entertainment and dancing. ■ MCC of San Diego, CA, has been chosen to receive a grant in the amount of \$6,000 from AIDS walk San Diego. This money will be designated for salary for an AIDS Service Coordinator for the church. ■ Jesus MCC, Indianapolis, IN, has raised over \$3400.00 so far through their "One Dime at a Time" Campaign to fund their participation at General Conference in Sydney. Members have saved dimes in soft drink cans for the past two years. ■ Congratulations to Becky Dickman, pastor of Appalachian MCC, and to their congregation for calling a town meeting to meet with local officials concerning treatment of the gay community. Pastor Dickman was appointed liaison to the police department and has since taught a course to the police on cultural diversity. ■ Please remember the Rev. Ed Paul as he returns to Manila, Philippines, to do missionary work for MCC there. If you would like to contribute to this vital effort please write to the Rev. Judy Dahl at UFMCC

Continued

PlanetOut (keyword: PNO, select Chats, select Topic Chats and then find UFMCC. The room has a webpage at <http://members.aol.com/pnotigger> to answer your questions.

UFMCC's webpage continues to grow and is a great resource of GLBT Christians. You'll find a variety of timely information, including recent denominational news releases, press statements by Troy Perry, updates on Conference, Bible and homosexuality information, UFMCC history, and links to more than 130 MCC's.

Details on the chat rooms are also found on the church page of the UFMCC web site (<http://www.ufmcc.com>). Presently the rooms

A Message from Troy Perry

Never before in 29 years of ministry to our community have I felt such a sense of excitement and pride as I'm feeling today. Excitement about the historic General Conference in Australia... and pride at the response of our people and churches to this significant, international event.



The early statistics have been tallied and I'm pleased to report that we had the highest early registration on March 1 of any General Conference in UFMCC history as of that date.

I am convinced that God is moving in a powerful way – and that this is going to be our most historic, exciting General Conference ever. Enthusiasm is running high in our churches in Australia. International press outlets are contacting us for information. God is preparing to move us to a whole new level of dynamic ministry! Together, we are going to make history as we gather for the largest religious conference of gays and lesbians ever held in the Pacific Rim!

It's not too late for you to attend this historic, life-changing General Conference in Australia. Our travel agency will continue to process travel reservations right through June!

Again, I am praising God for the positive, enthusiastic responses we are receiving to General Conference – and I'm pleased to extend a personal invitation for you to join us in Australia July 20-25 for six historic, life-changing days. Won't you join us for this opportunity of a lifetime? We must be the "Light of the World!"

are only accessible to AOL members, but the Fellowship and PlanetOut have plans to expand our outreach to include the World Wide Web in the future.

UFMCC has also expanded its e-mail information services. Anyone interested in signing up for this free service to receive news digests, action alerts, press statements and church news may e-mail their request to UFMCCHQ@aol.com.

HARVEST MCC FILES FEDERAL LAWSUIT TO PROTECT FREEDOM

Harvest MCC (Denton/Corinth, TX) has filed suit in federal court to protect their right to freedom of worship. Harvest MCC purchased land for their growing congregation, but city officials denied their request for a Special Use Permit for use as a church – even though the property has been used for more than two years as a Korean prayer and retreat center.

According to Harvest's senior pastor, the Rev. Colleen Darraugh, the church purchased 12.5 acres which formed an ideal location for the church. The land had been tested for suitability for construction and already included a chapel used by the Korean prayer center.

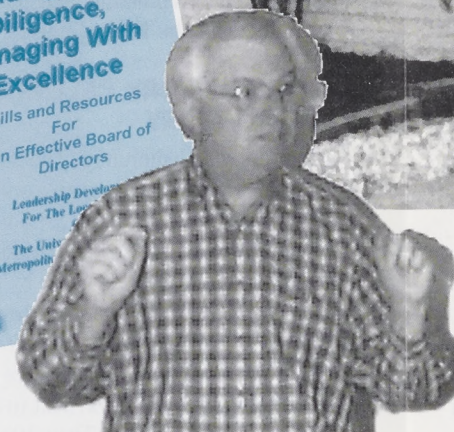
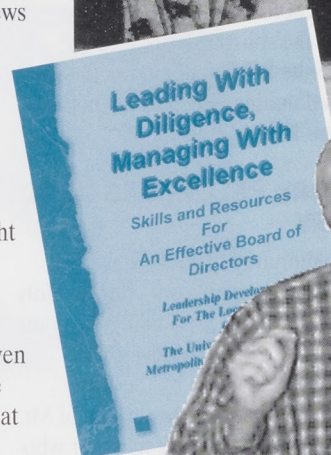
According to Pastor Darraugh, the church was surprised when the planning commission denied Harvest's application. The city council then unanimously denied the permit. Pastor Darraugh noted that publicly expressed concerns focused on loss of potential tax revenue. However, she was quick to note that Harvest's zoning change would mean only a 0.2% change in overall light industrial land and that the sale of the current church property would actually generate additional taxes.

The church was especially concerned that many of the local citizens had expressed opposition to having a "gay" church in their neighborhood. One citizen told Pastor Darraugh he didn't want his children to see gay people. Other neighbors tried to persuade the owner not to sell because Harvest was a gay church. Pastor Darraugh is convinced community opposition is being fueled by homophobia rather than tax loss.

In the process, Harvest MCC has received intense media coverage from newspapers, television stations and radio talk shows.

Now the church's only appeal is to the federal courts. On April 16, 1997, Harvest MCC filed a federal suit against the City of Corinth, TX to protect the church's right to freedom of worship.

The Rev. Troy D. Perry, UFMCC modera-



tor, was quick to send a message of encouragement to the Harvest congregation. Elder Perry noted, "It was with joy that I learned you had filed suit in Federal Court. I commend you for putting legs on your prayers. Please know that I believe you are doing the right thing and that all of us at UFMCC Headquarters are in prayer for you at this time. I know the lawsuit may take a little time—don't get discouraged. Remember, God may be slow, but God is always on time."

INTOLERANCE DISGUISED AS COMPASSION

The hospital corridors grow silent. In five minutes, visiting hours will end. Since morn-

Justice

Rev. Dr. Mel White
Minister of Justice

ing, you've waited. No one came. You're feeling particularly vulnerable when suddenly a

stranger enters your room carrying flowers and smiling broadly.

"Hello," he says. "My name is John. Where would you like the flowers?"

You don't recognize the friendly stranger but you've seen that Cheshire grin before; and though you're glad that someone seems to care, this man makes you feel uneasy.

"God can forgive you, son" the stranger says, moving towards your bed. "God can make you well if you'll only let Him."

Alarm bells ring. Sirens sound. You are

평화연습



■ **Fightin' and teachin':** While Pastor Colleen Darraugh of Harvest MCC found herself in court over the church's right to worship in Denton, Texas (above), Elder Don Eastman was a presenter at the UFMCC's first mini-conference in St. Louis.

entering the twilight zone where dangerous untruth prevails. Beware! The visitor about to sit on the edge of your bed means well, but he is a victim of misinformation. Don't let him make you a victim as well.

Like leprosy in the first century, HIV/AIDS has been falsely associated by un-informed religious leaders with 'sin.' If the virus is contracted by so many gay men and drug users, they reason, it must be "a sign of God's anger." No matter that God loves gay men and drug users as much as God loves the babies who are born infected and the celibate, cloistered nuns who contract the virus through tainted blood.

"Go away," you say quietly, realizing his agenda.

"Can I pray for you before I go?" he asks, still smiling.

"Go away," you say again, pressing firmly on the call button.

Don't let him ask another question. Don't take his literature. Don't even let him pray. Just press the button and point him towards the door.

I don't like describing this all-too-familiar-scene for many reasons, most of them raised by my wise friend and colleague, Lemar Rodgers. He is convinced that the real problem for people with AIDS is not the person who appears wearing compassion to mask intolerance, but the friends and family who promise compassion and fail to deliver.

Second, Lemar doesn't want me to caricature all people of faith as intolerant when they aren't. In fact, across the country conservative Christians are beginning to understand that HIV/AIDS is just another powerful virus that one day, soon, with God's help, we will render powerless.

Third, my friend doesn't want us to be afraid and suspicious of the people of faith who appear in our lives offering compassion. There is a new wave of care-givers, people of faith who are overcoming their ignorance and fear, who are taking this epidemic seriously. Under the direction of Steve Pieters, our own UFMCC AIDS Ministry has led the way.

In the meantime, how do we respond when we realize that someone has appeared in our life (a stranger or a friend) who wears compassion as a mask, but is really there to condemn and convert us? Here are a few suggestions on dealing with intolerance that comes in disguise:

1. Most people who reach out to you, really do care.
2. All people of faith are not your enemy; but, if they're wearing a 700 Club button, or carrying a Focus on the Family tract, or misusing the Bible to condemn you, pick up the call button and push it.
3. If they connect AIDS (or any suffering) with God's judgment, they are misinformed. AIDS is a virus. Suffering comes "to the just and the unjust." You are God's beloved child. God hates the virus and loves you.
4. Real compassion loves and accepts you exactly as you are. Once you've established that your visitor is genuinely compassionate, relax and enjoy.
5. Don't stop your own spirit journey just because so many people of faith are ignorant and intolerant. Don't toss out the Book, just because they misuse it.
6. And next time, when you feel most alone, remember that the spirit of your loving Creator is with you always. Don't be afraid to share your deepest feelings with the One who loves you now, and who, in spite of anything you do or say, will go on loving you forever.

E-MAIL AND THE INTERNET FOR FREE (OR FOR JUST A LITTLE MONEY!)

Do you keep hearing all of those great things about e-mail and Internet access but don't know

Hands-On

Rev. Maggie Tanis
Director, Clergy Development

where to start? Looking for FREE or low-cost options? Check these out!

For FREE access to e-mail within the US, contact Juno at 1-800-654-JUNO (or at www.juno.com); the software and e-mail access are free; Juno is the fifth largest e-mail provider in the US; not available for Macintosh users.

For FREE e-mail if you have access to the World Wide Web (including through other people's computers, cafes, etc.) from anywhere in the world, contact HotMail at www.hotmail.com or (408) 222-7000. Only basic Internet access through any provider is required; you don't even need to own the computer!

Need a FREE web browser? You can download free web browsers and viewers to install on your computer from the Microsoft Network home page at www.microsoft.com.

Interested in a FREE home page?

A Fellowship of Activity

Continued

Headquarters. ■ MCC of Northern Virginia, Falls Church, VA, recently celebrated their 16th Anniversary with a "Sweet 16 Dance" in April at a local hotel with dancing, an auction, and lots of entertainment. ■ You really can continue to do God's work after death. A bequest was recently received from the late Larry McIndoo of his home to MCC-LA, CA. Through the sale of the home MCC-LA was able to donate \$60,000 to the UFMCC Capital Campaign. ■ MCC Milwaukee, WI, had seven members present and ready to testify in favor of same gender marriage before the Wisconsin Assembly Committee on Children and Families. They were joined in this venture by nine members from Angels of Hope MCC, Green Bay, WI. ■ Ms. Marsha Stevens of BALM Ministries spent the past month in Florida with her son completing her latest album in time for General Conference. She has also written, and will sing, the conference theme song, "You Are the Light of the World."

PRAYERS

Good News from Rev. Elder Jeri Ann Harvey! She reports she is getting stronger and will begin traveling again soon. Her doctors say she cannot fly every week so she is in the process of purchasing a motor home thanks to a generous donation given to her recently. Please continue to keep her in your prayers. ■ Prayers for the family of Rev. Gina Chapman, pastor of Good Samaritan MCC, Whittier, CA, whose mother passed away on April 6. ■ Continued prayers are needed for Sheila Kuhn who is battling cancer which is now progressing quickly in her bones. ■ Prayers for the family of Ravi Verma, Director of Administration for UFMCC, whose father has been hospitalized recently in Bombay, India. ■ Prayers for the family and friends of Mr. David Taggart, New Zealand Area Coordinator from 1991-95 who has passed away. Keep the District in your prayers as they mourn his passing. ■ Prayers for Rev. Michael Horn, the Area Coordinator for New Zealand, recovering from a stroke that occurred in March. ■ Prayers for Rev. Jane Carl and Rev. Susan Deitrick who have just moved to Akron, OH. Just before moving, Jane's vehicle burned in a fire.

MEET GENERAL CONFERENCE REGISTRATION WINNERS!

We are pleased to announce the three winners of the General Conference XVIII Registration Lottery. The drawing was held during the March General Council meeting. Congratulations to the three winners who will receive free Conference registrations:



Mr. David Sorey, Lay Delegate, MCC of the Rockies, Denver, CO
"Thank you for the surprise! I was surprised and delighted to hear that I was one of the winners!"



Ms. Myra Marshall, Lay Delegate, Reconciliation MCC, Grand Rapids, MI
"Thank you for the wonderful news! See you in Australia!"



Mr. Richard Murphy, Registrant, MCC South Beach, Miami, FL
"I couldn't be more pleased or surprised! The Lord is definitely working in my life; I asked for a sign but never expected such a resounding response!"

Keeping In Touch May 1997

The monthly publication of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches, a church of the lesbian and gay community, open to all. Our mission is to call people to new life through the liberating gospel of Jesus Christ, confront injustice through Christian social action, and create a community of healing and reconciliation. *Keeping in Touch* may be freely copied for distribution in UFMCC. Portions may be reprinted in UFMCC church publications, with attribution. For other distribution, please request permission. Subscription free upon request. Send address changes, news, and ideas to:
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Web site <http://www.ufmcc.com>
Deadline for each issue is the 10th of prior month.

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Europeans can have a free web page courtesy of Europe@home. They have directions in many European languages (just click on the flag) and can be reached at www.yi.com/hom. Pages for individuals are free and professional home pages are 10 ECUs a month.

FREE home pages and e-mail are available through Geocities. One of their virtual neighborhoods is "West Hollywood," for gay and lesbian virtual residents (and the geographic home of the UFMCC headquarters). You'll find other MCCs here. Find Geocities at www.geocities.com.

Additional (and relatively inexpensive) e-mail and Internet sources are: ■ America Online, in the US, call 1-800-827-6364, \$19.95 per month unlimited access to the Internet, AOL services and e-mail; the service used by the majority of MCCs ■ Internet Helpshop, in Australia; call David Rand at 61-7-5527 8994 for access information from your city for e-mail and home pages ■ MSN (Microsoft Network), for Australia, Canada, France, United Kingdom and United States; call 1-800-386-5550 in the US, \$6.95 per month for 5 hours and \$19.95 per month for unlimited usage; in Australia, call 02 9934 9000; in France, call 05 91 7242; and in the United Kingdom, call 0800 750 800. ■ Prodigy, call 1-800-776-3449 with service at \$19.95 per month for unlimited usage or \$9.95 per month for 5 hours plus \$2.95 for each additional hour

THE RE-STIGMATIZATION OF HIV

It's happening again: people who are being diagnosed with HIV today are being stigmatized by their diagnosis. Other people seem to be saying, "We know how to prevent HIV transmission now... how could you do this to yourself?"

Stigma is a stain on our character, which negatively affects the way others see us. In the early eighties, the stigma was based in fear... fear of illness, death, and the unknown. There are many stories of how AIDS inspired tremendous fear in the general population, due to the unknowns of the epidemic. Today, the stigma is based in anger, battle fatigue, and apathy.

Because of these attitudes, people are learning to be ashamed of their infection. They fear disclosure. This can lead to living in the HIV closet, which, as it always has, prevents a person from getting appropriate support and even health care. At the Global Headquarters of the UFMCC, we know that there are many more of our leadership living with HIV than have identified themselves to us.

But the fact remains that they still need support, encouragement, and a positive attitude. We need to believe in ourselves

HIV/AIDS

Rev. Steve Pieters

Director, HIV/AIDS Ministry

Metropolitan
Community Church of
the Resurrection
Houston, Texas

Announces

Full-Time
Position

**Assistance
Pastor/Director
of Small
Groups**

Develop and implement cell groups

Ideal Candidate:

- College Degree
- Leadership Experience with 1000-Member Church (Any Denomination)
- Two years Experience with UFMCC
- Expertise in the Development and Implementation of Cell Groups

Please submit letter of interest and resume by May 31, 1997 to:

Staff Development

MCCR

1919 Decatur

Houston, TX 77007-7698

enough to do the work of staying alive with HIV.

Being open about HIV may take strength and courage. The only way to change attitudes, I believe, is to put a human face on the condition, and challenge the assumptions that people are making through their stigmatization of others. Not everyone can afford to do this. But I have confidence that there will always be some who will remain open and challenge the injustices of stigma.

ST. JOHN'S MCC CHOIR WINS ACCLAIM

The Voices, the sanctuary choir of St. John's MCC, Raleigh, NC, was selected "Best And Most Diverse Gospel Choir" in the "Best Of..." issue of a mainline newspaper serving North Carolina. The newspaper noted, "St. John's MCC in Raleigh is a Christian church where all are welcome. This commitment is exemplified by The Voices' membership: gay, lesbian, straight, black, white, Asian and physically challenged men and women. Whatever their walk of life, the choir members are all involved in a common ministry, one with a long history in the South: spreading the Good News to any folks willing to open their ears, minds and hearts." David Heid serves as St. John's Director of Music, and is Conference Music Director of UFMCC General Conference XVIII in Australia.

GLOBAL OUTREACH "ON LINE"

It's challenging and exciting to see how the UFMCC is developing in virtual reality. Those of us who have the privilege to be "on-line" know how quickly and easily (sometimes) we can access the world of information. Our ability to "reach to all the ends of the earth..." has been increased in exponential ways. The "universal" reality of our denomination is no longer a dream or a goal; it is a happening!

The seven existing countries and continents which currently comprise the Global Outreach of the UFMCC, and the seven remaining areas which comprise our districts, are the foundation for the development of our universal presence in the world. We have an awesome and enlivening task ahead of us.

In just a few weeks, China's takeover of Hong Kong will be official. We are certainly aware of the potential enhanced discrimination which will confront our trans-les-bi-gay sisters and brothers in Hong Kong.

It is profoundly noticeable how close in time to this takeover is UFMCC's General Conference in Australia. For the first time in our

history, we will meet as a religious body of faith-filled, love-empowered people, to share our light on the Pacific Rim! Hong Kong is not too far away. Perhaps we will go as God's answer to a contemporary day struggle. Perhaps, though we may sometimes feel small and irrelevant, God sends us as a Light to the World.

It is no small thing we do, when we gather together in Sydney. It is not just for us that we go. It is not just to do our business, but to bring light to the world. Perhaps, as the alert spreads out across the fiber optics of our virtual reality, we have a once in a lifetime opportunity to go on-line and set the world on fire!

FIRST REGIONAL MINI-CONFERENCE HELD LAST MONTH IN SAINT LOUIS

The first ever UFMCC Regional Mini-Conference was held in St. Louis in April. More than forty MCCers from fourteen churches attended this weekend conference which highlighted the role of the board of directors and creative ways to conduct capital campaigns.

Workshop presenters included Elder Don Eastman, Ravi Verma, Bob King, and J Hulsey-Mazur. District coordinators in attendance were Judy Dale and the Rev. Bob Arthur. Look for information coming soon on the next UFMCC Mini-Conference. Mini-Conferences are especially designed for the convenience of lay persons and offer sessions on Friday evening and all day Saturday, with optional modules available on Sunday mornings.

Our readers rate us "two snaps."

Here's what readers say about SECOND STONE, the national ecumenical Christian newspaper for gays and lesbians: "A real and true uplift..." "the best articles..." "very informative..." "excellent sense of balance..." Take a look at Second Stone... you'll see why our subscribers love us!

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A Fellowship of Activity

Continued

UPCOMING CONFERENCES AND EVENTS

May 23-27 - Mountains & Plains District Conference and Clergy Retreat Guest speaker Tex Sample with the theme of "Other Sheep Have I".

May 29-June 1 - Great Lakes District Conference Special guests Rev. Elder Wilhelmina Hein and Ms. Beth Clark. Theme of the conference is "Asking God" with focus on local Church issues. To be held at French Quarter Holiday Inn, Perrysburg, Ohio.

June 6-8 - EXCEL Weekend Excel in the Son will hold a weekend in St. Petersburg, Florida.

July 13-15 - Northwest District Conference Honolulu, Hawaii.

JULY 20-25 GENERAL CONFERENCE XVIII SYDNEY AUSTRALIA

CLASSIFIEDS

MCC of Greater St. Louis, Missouri, a chartered UFMCC Church since 1974, announces a pastoral vacancy effective March 20, 1997. Located in a large metropolitan area, MCC St. Louis serves a diverse population. MCC St. Louis' active membership is in excess of one hundred, with two Sunday worship services to serve the community. We are an energetic, growing congregation seeking to employ a Senior Pastor. Interested clergy please respond to: MCC of Greater St. Louis, Pastoral Search Committee, P.O. Box 13410, St. Louis, MO 63138-0410.

UFMCC Eastern Canadian District is now receiving nominations for their upcoming election for District Coordinator. The current District Coordinator, Rev. Marcie Wexler, will stand for re-election. Send resumes to the District office at 33 Holly St., #1117, Toronto, ON, Canada M4S- 2G8.

Gail Bird Vestments, Inc., has just issued a new catalog of vestments and paraments, featuring items of special interest to MCC clergy. To obtain a copy write: P.O. Box 211271, Denver, CO 80221; Phone or FAX 303/431-9163.

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24 HENRY GUESTHOUSE is a serene, non-smoking environment close to everything in San Francisco's Gay Castro District. 1-800-900-5686. (415) 864-5686. FAX: (415) 864-0406.

ATTENTION Gay Servicemembers! Know your legal rights: Say Nothing, Sign Nothing, and get legal help if you are ever investigated. Call Servicemembers Legal Defense Network for confidential counseling (202) 328-FAIR.



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FIRST CLASS PRESORT

Chronicles

TOP 20 TITHES - MARCH 1997

1.	MCC of the Resurrection, Houston, TX	\$6,182.99
2.	MCC Washington, Washington, DC	\$3,817.60
3.	King of Peace MCC, St. Petersburg, FL	\$2,672.52
4.	MCC Long Beach, Long Beach, CA	\$2,404.87
5.	MCC New York, New York, NY	\$2,400.73
6.	MCC San Francisco, San Francisco, CA	\$2,304.81
7.	MCC of the Rockies, Denver, CO	\$2,287.54
8.	MCC San Diego, San Diego, CA	\$1,976.37
9.	Joy MCC, Orlando, FL	\$1,886.39
10.	St. John's MCC, Raleigh, NC	\$1,646.90
11.	First MCC of Atlanta, Atlanta, GA	\$1,620.67
12.	MCC Charlotte, Charlotte, NC	\$1,581.73
13.	Harvest MCC, Denton, TX	\$1,452.94
14.	MCC Tampa, Tampa, FL	\$1,450.74
15.	Gentle Shepherd MCC, Phoenix, AZ	\$1,401.69
16.	First MCC of Kansas, Wichita, KS	\$1,376.02
17.	Open Door MCC, Boyds, MD	\$1,327.40
18.	MCC Richmond, Richmond, VA	\$1,293.12
19.	MCC Charleston, Charleston, SC	\$1,223.60
20.	Christ Covenant MCC, Decatur, GA	\$1,163.55

[These figures reflect the 10 percent of each local church's monthly income that is reported to the Fellowship headquarters.]

TOP 20 PER CAPITA - MARCH 1997

1.	MCC Family in Christ, Ft. Collins, CO	\$38.68
2.	Spirit of Peace MCC, Prairie Grove, AR	\$35.62
3.	MCC of Greater Hayward, San Lorenzo, CA	\$31.65
4.	Gentle Souls MCC, Kansas City, MO	\$30.50
5.	MCC Long Beach, Long Beach, CA	\$30.33
6.	Gentle Shepherd MCC, Phoenix, AZ	\$30.01
7.	MCC Glendale, Glendale, CA	\$29.17
8.	MCC Johnson County, Shawnee, KS	\$26.52
9.	Resurrection MCC, Chicago, IL	\$25.77
10.	New Creation MCC, Columbus, OH	\$24.73
11.	Resurrection Beach MCC, Huntington Bch, CA	\$24.13
12.	MCC Augusta, Augusta, GA	\$24.11
13.	Open Arms MCC, Rochester, NY	\$22.69
14.	Good Shepherd Parish MCC, Chicago, IL	\$22.39
15.	New Life MCC, Charlotte, NC	\$21.61
16.	MCC of Northern Virginia, Falls Church, VA	\$21.58
17.	Safe Harbor MCC, Memphis, TN	\$21.41
18.	MCC Amarillo, Amarillo, TX	\$20.77
19.	MCC of the Pomona Valley, Claremont, CA	\$19.95
20.	MCC of the Resurrection, Houston, TX	\$19.88

[These figures reflect the average individual weekly offering to the local church.]